ISSN 0712-7774

Cerebus

$1.70 USA ● $2.00 CANADA ● £1 UK

ASCENSION'S END

PART ONE

105
DEC

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

A lot of it we've got on film . . . video, actually.

Bought a camera especially for the event. The original idea was to show all of the footage we had at Mid-Ohio Con. "Continuous showings" type of thing. Well, when we reviewed a lot of it, well, that idea sort of died a natural death. We (me 'n' Ger) 'd just both say in unison, "Man. Maybe not." and we cut out bits. A lot of it isn't on film. I remember in particular arguing with Bob about the way we were going to do the middle with the Carrot convincing Cerebus that he's necessary. It was arduous going because I had a sense of how I wanted it to **feel**, but I didn't have Bob's rhythm down. Or, really, it was more that I had a kind of Flaming Carrot cadence in mind and I was trying to get Bob to plug in authentic phrases. Make it sound like the Carrot. I remember **he** got kind of huffy with **me** one day because I wouldn't tell him when he had a bad idea for a word. He'd have these Alice in Wonderland streams of nonsense going and he'd need the next word and he'd say "helicopters" and I'd say "Great. That's it." Because it sounded right. I could picture Roxanne lettering "helicopters" and it was funny. But he was, like, "No, helicopters is dumb. Tell me when it's dumb." and looking at me like I'd stuck gum in his hair. I'd get sort of frantic, too, because you are suddenly aware that you're working with someone who is not on a monthly schedule. But bang! out of nowhere, there'd suddenly be a few more pages finished or with aardvarks and carrots finished waiting on some stone heads.

I even filled in solid blacks. Haven't done that in five years. Longer.

Couple of things took some getting used to. Like Bob has the television on a lot. Not even **watching** it particularly — it's just, you know, **on**. So I'd be drawing away, roughing in dialogue and erasing it and the fucking Flintstones are talking to themselves over behind me. And after a while you're like, **listening**. Fred and Barney join the army by mistake and end up being put in the new astronaut program to be shot in a rocket to the moon, At this point I'm pencilling the stone heads on pages 18 and 19 with the giant moon, so, I sort of go "mm", you know? Like, synchronicity or what, eh? The other thing was the phone. Me, I answer the phone on special occasions — Shrove Tuesday, Easter, anytime the stock market crashes. Bob is, like, **forever** on the phone. At least ten calls a day. I kept telling him "Bob, you could put the Carrot out **weekly** if you'd just stay off the damn phone." He said it was an unusual number of calls, but I don't know. I have this genuine phobia of ringing telephones and door-knocking. The way some people are about finger-nails on a blackboard. He comes by the phone thing honestly, anyway. His mum and dad came for a visit while we were there (I know, I find it hard to believe he has a mum and dad, too, but there you are. And they're lovely people, as well). Now Bob's outside, up a ladder getting leaves out of the eavestroughing and the phone rings. So, his mum answers and says "Just a minute" and goes and gets him. He gets down off the ladder comes inside, has, like, a twenty second conversation, "bye", back outside, back up the ladder and back to scooping leaves. Five seconds later the phone rings again, mum answers "Just a minute" and goes and gets him and I **swear** he comes back in and answers the phone without batting an eyelash.

Okay, now you can get Bob's side of it.

CEREBUS

No. 105 DECEMBER 1987

DAVE SIM
President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones.

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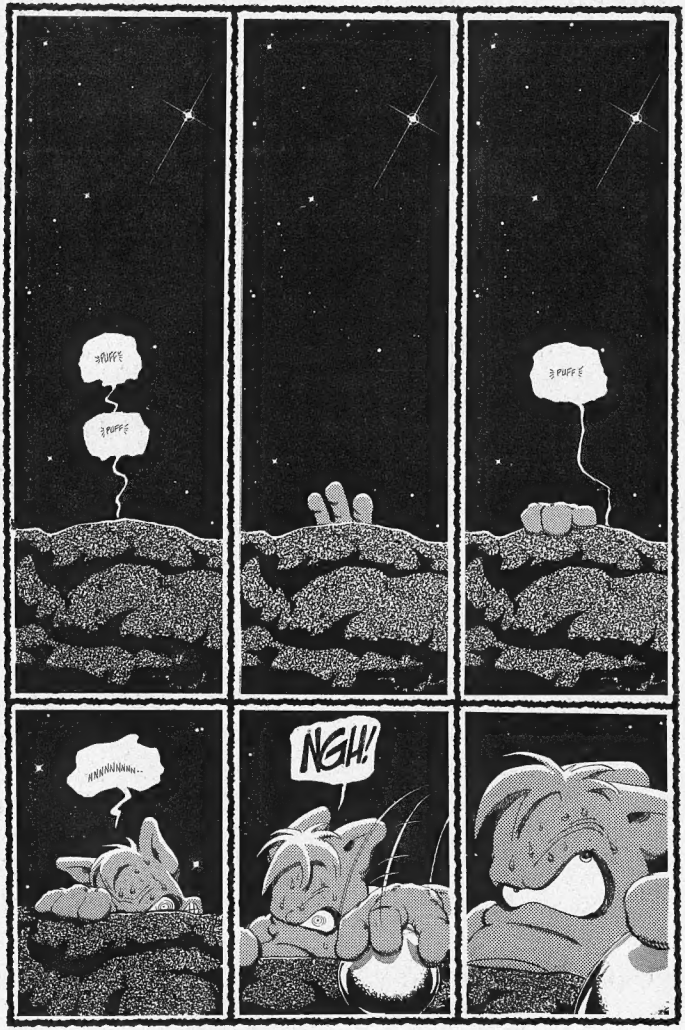
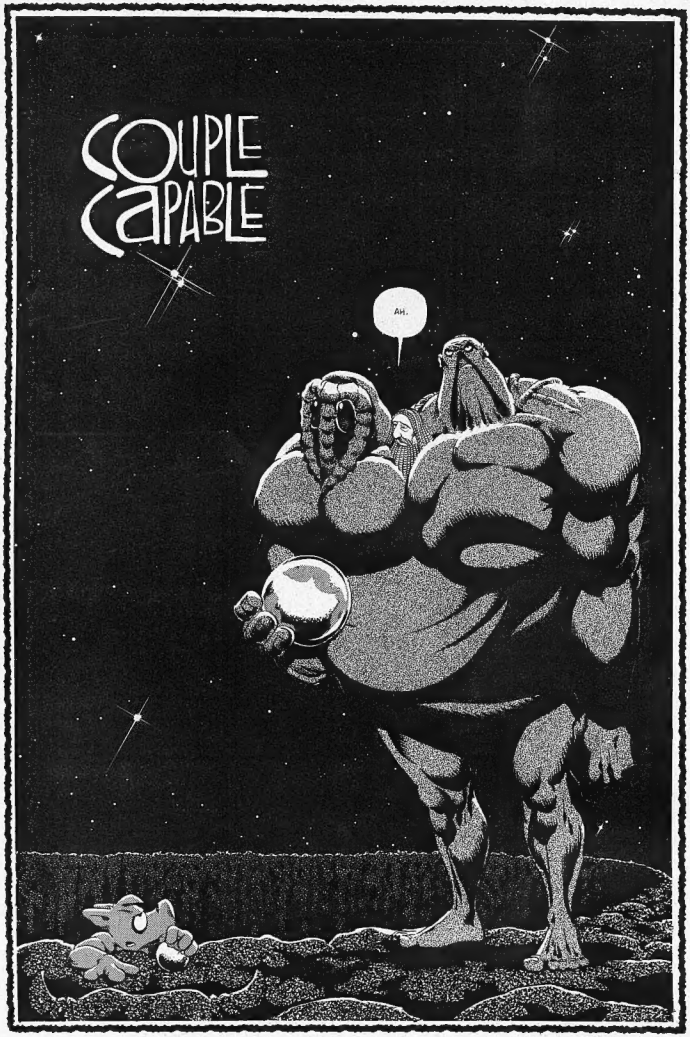
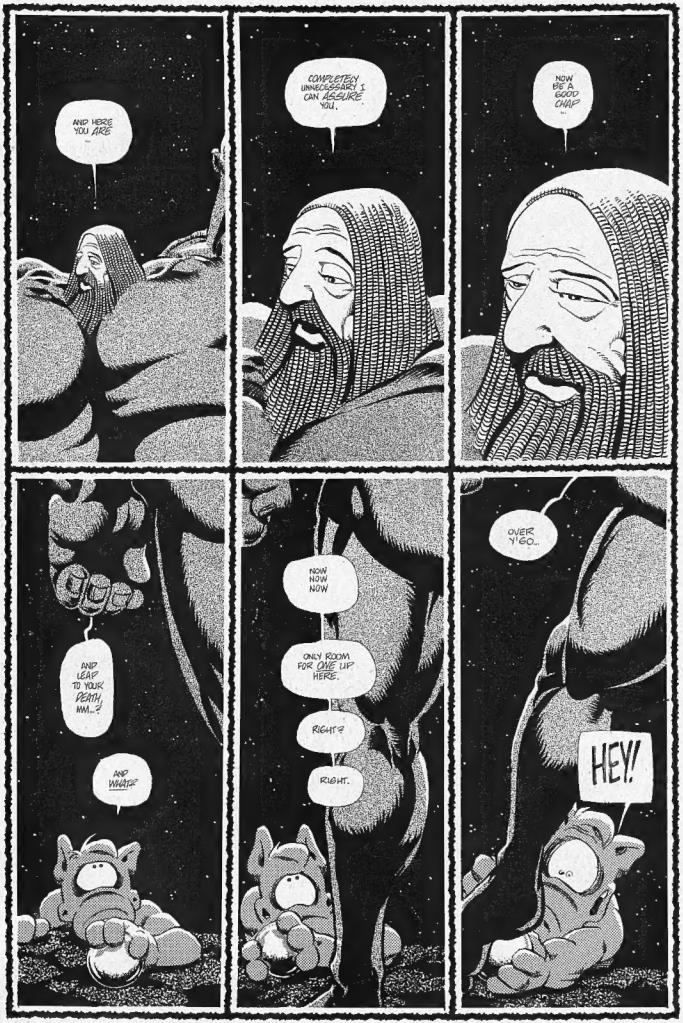
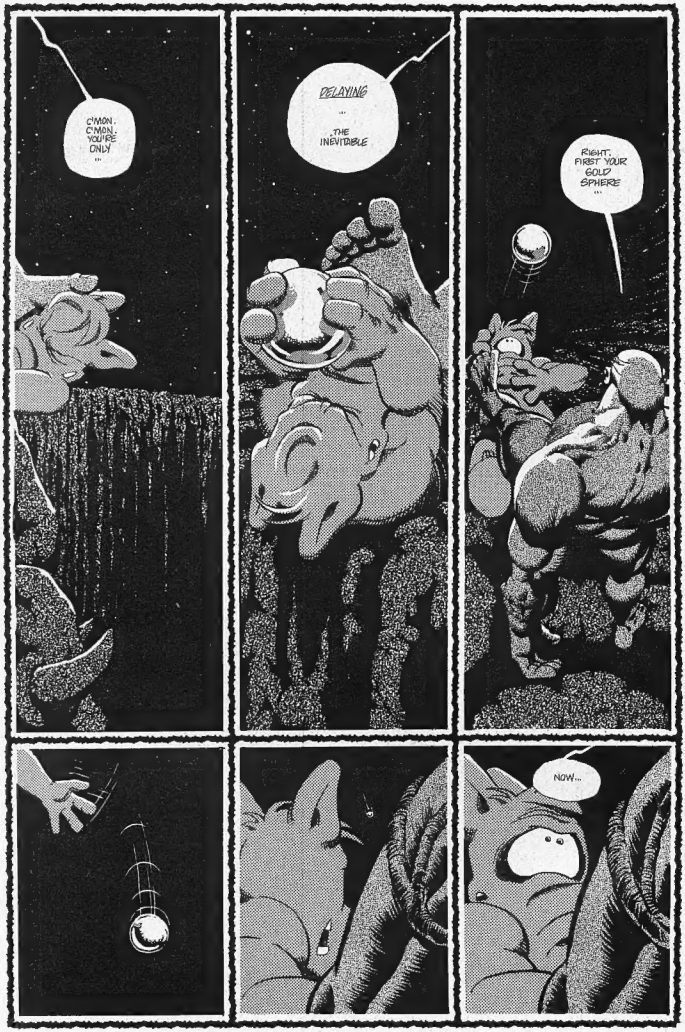
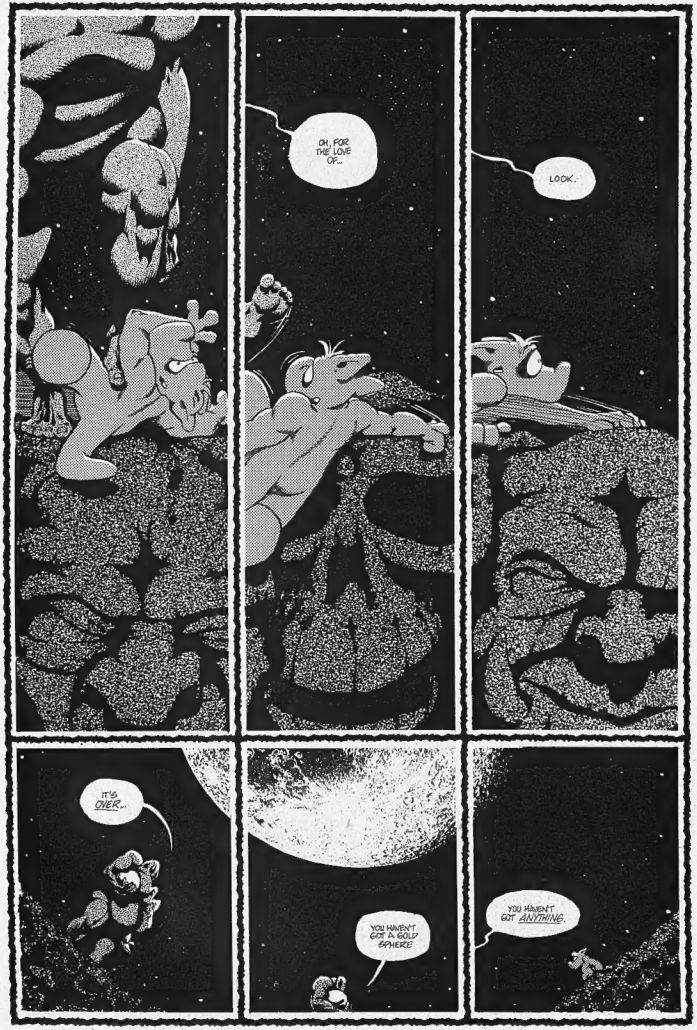
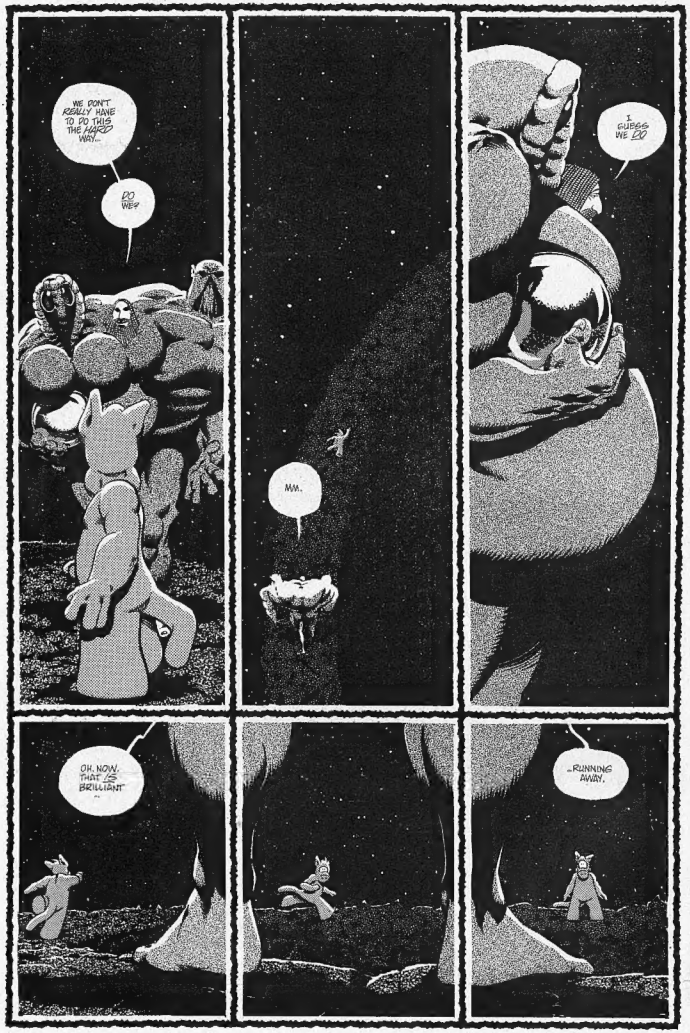

PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
NNNNNNNN...
NGH!

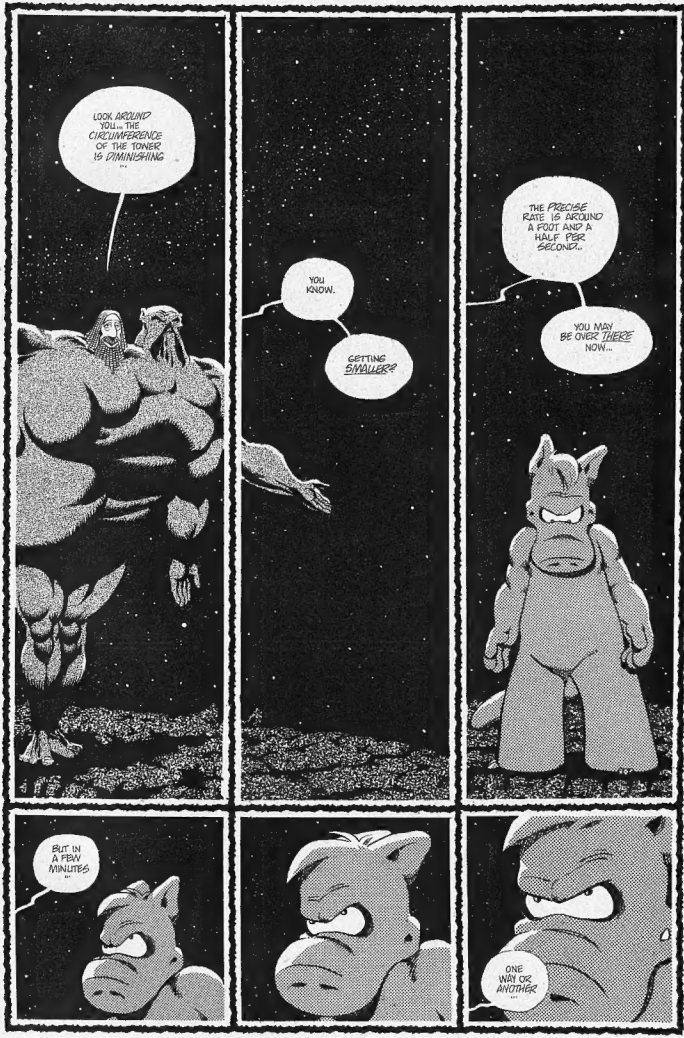

COUPLE CAPABLE
AH.

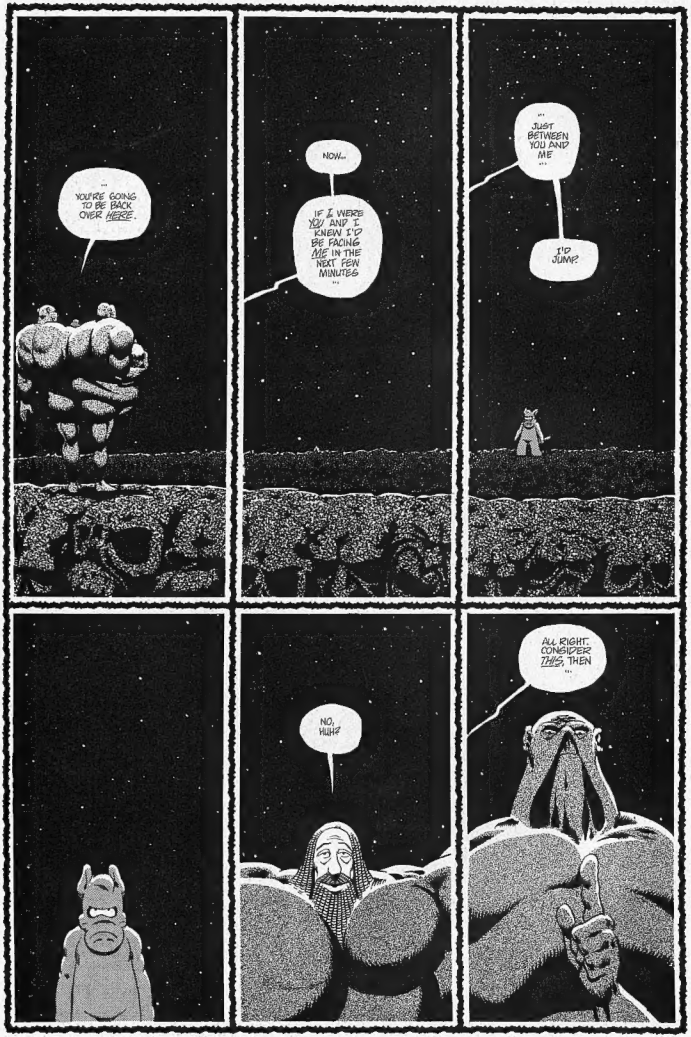

AND HERE YOU ARE
COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY I CAN ASSURE YOU.
NOW BE A GOOD CHAP
AND LEAP TO YOUR DEATH, HM...?
AND WHAT?
NOW NOW NOW
ONLY ROOM FOR ONE UP HERE.
RIGHT?
RIGHT.
OVER Y'GO..
HEY!

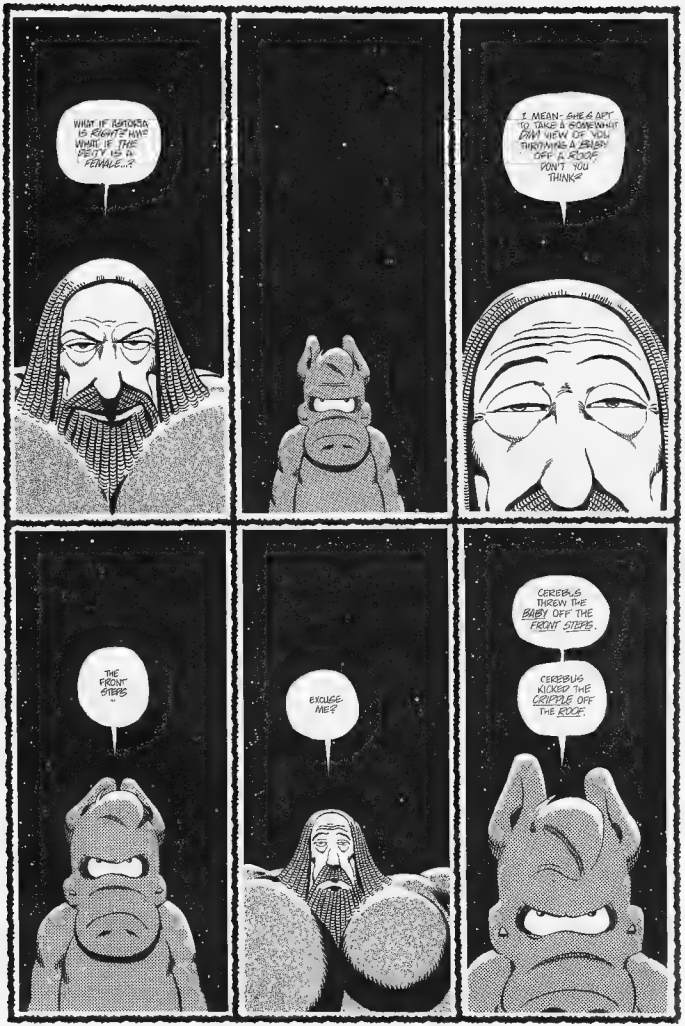

C'MON. C'MON. YOU'RE ONLY ...
DELAYING ... THE INEVITABLE
RIGHT. FIRST YOUR GOLD SPHERE ...
NOW...


OH, FOR THE LOVE OF...
LOOK.
IT'S OVER...
YOU HAVEN'T GOT A GOLD SPHERE!
YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANYTHING.

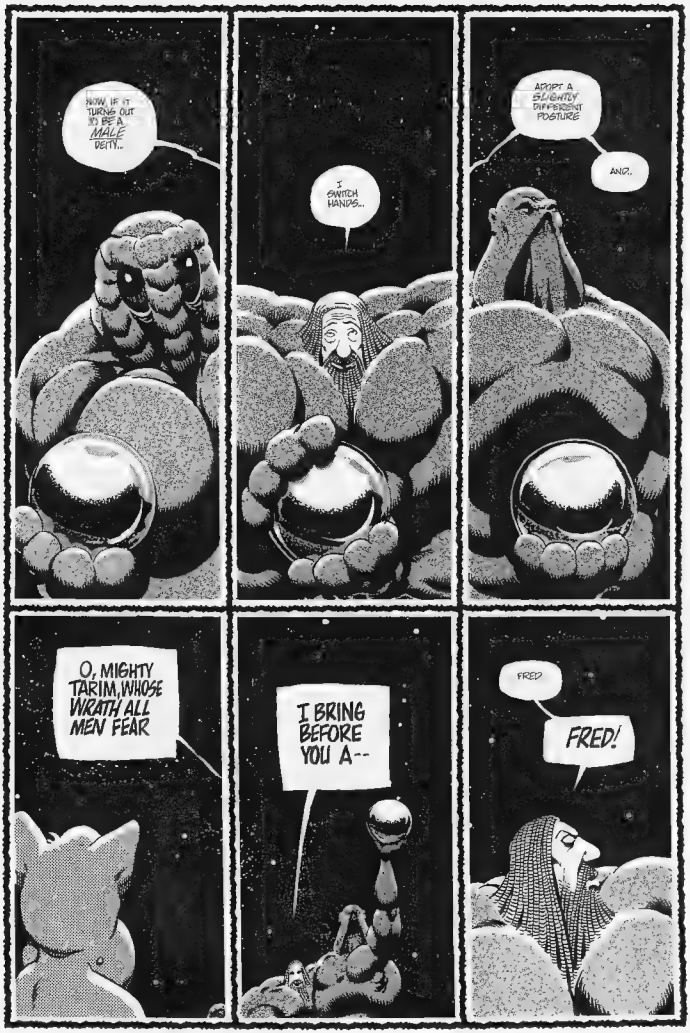

WE DON'T REALLY HAVE TO DO THIS THE HARD WAY...
DO WE?
MM.
I GUESS WE DO
OH. NOW. THAT IS BRILLIANT ...
...RUNNING AWAY.

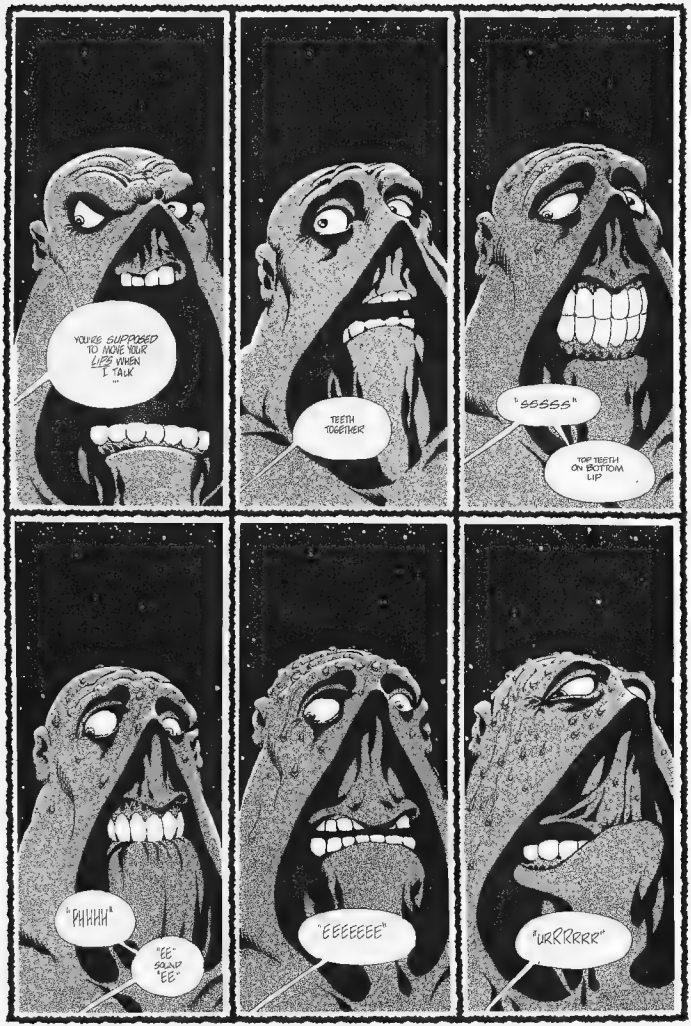

LOOK AROUND YOU... THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE TONER IS DIMINISHING ...
YOU KNOW.
GETTING SMALLER?
THE PRECISE RATE IS AROUND A FOOT AND A HALF PER SECOND...
YOU MAY BE OVER THERE NOW...
BUT IN A FEW MINUTES ...
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER ...

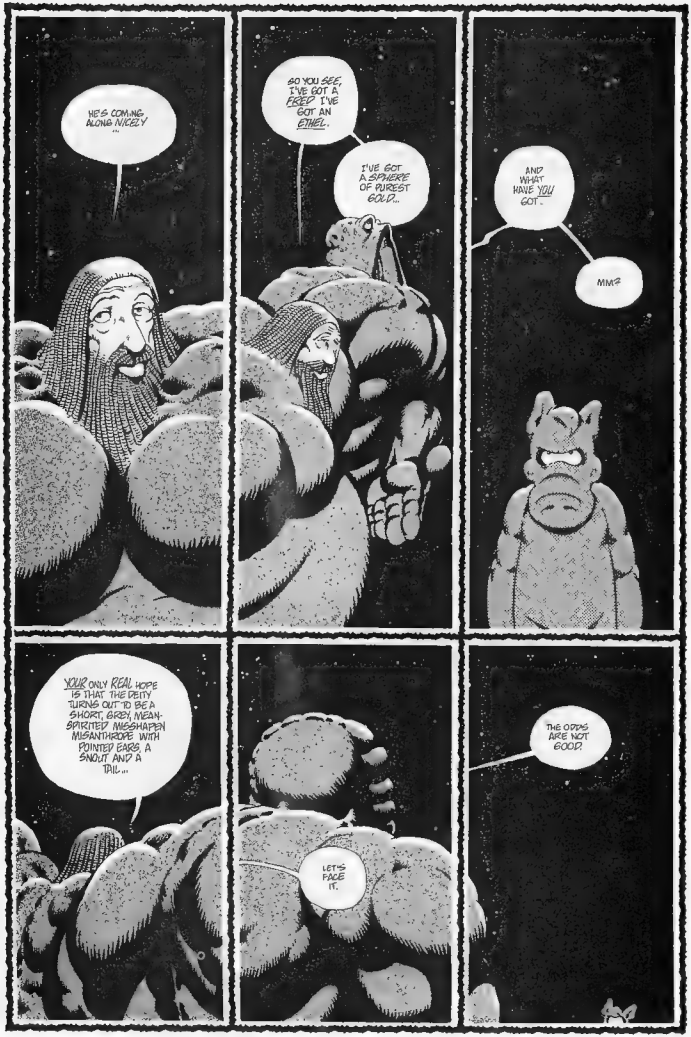

YOU'RE GOING TO BE BACK OVER HERE.
NOW...
IF I WERE YOU AND I KNEW I'D BE FACING ME IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES
...
...
JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME
...
I'D JUMP.
NO, HUH?
ALL RIGHT. CONSIDER THIS, THEN
...


WHAT IF ASTORIA IS RIGHT? HAVE WHAT IF THE DEITY IS A FEMALE...?
I MEAN- SHE'S GOT TO TAKE A SOMEWHAT DIM VIEW OF YOU THROWING A BABY OFF A ROOF, DON'T YOU THINK?
THE FRONT STEPS."
EXCUSE ME?
CEREBUS THREW THE BABY OFF THE FRONT STEPS.
CEREBUS KICKED THE CRIPPLE OFF THE ROOF.

SO MUCH FOR ATTEMPTING TO INVOLVE YOU INTELLECTUALLY IN THE ISSUE AT HAND
PERHAPS A DEMONSTRATION IS IN ORDER...
AHEM
HEM
O, BOUNTIFUL TERIM, MOTHER OF ALL THAT LIVES, BEHOLD!
I BRING YOU A SPHERE OF PUREST GOLD!
AND? um...
ON AND ON IN THAT VEIN.

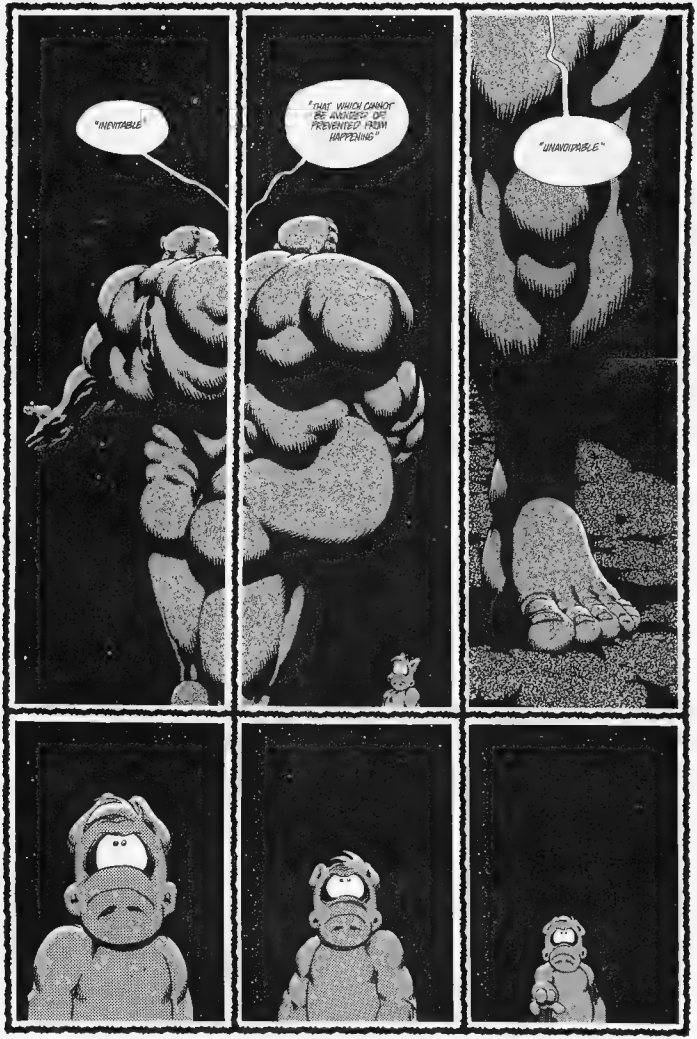

NOW, IF IT TURNS OUT TO BE A MALE DEITY...
I SWITCH HANDS...
ADOPT A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT POSTURE
AND..
O, MIGHTY TARIM, WHOSE WRATH ALL MEN FEAR
I BRING BEFORE YOU A--
FRED
FRED!

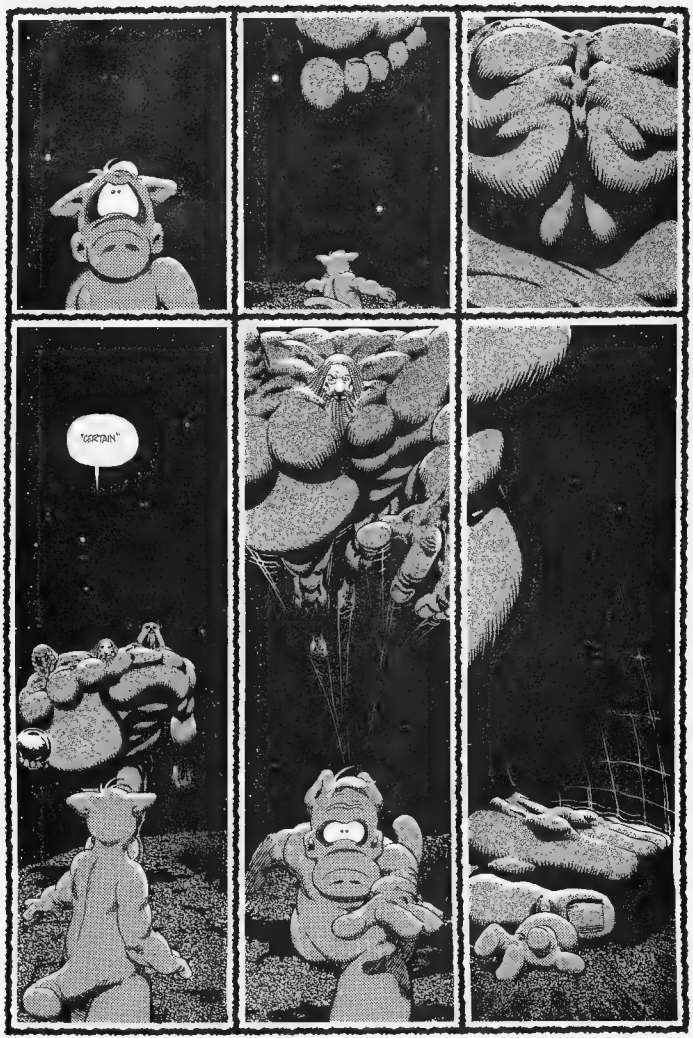

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO MOVE YOUR LIPS WHEN I TALK
TEETH TOGETHER
"SSSSS"
TOP TEETH ON BOTTOM LIP
"PHHHH"
"EE" SQUAD "EE"
"EEEEEEE"
"URRRRRR"

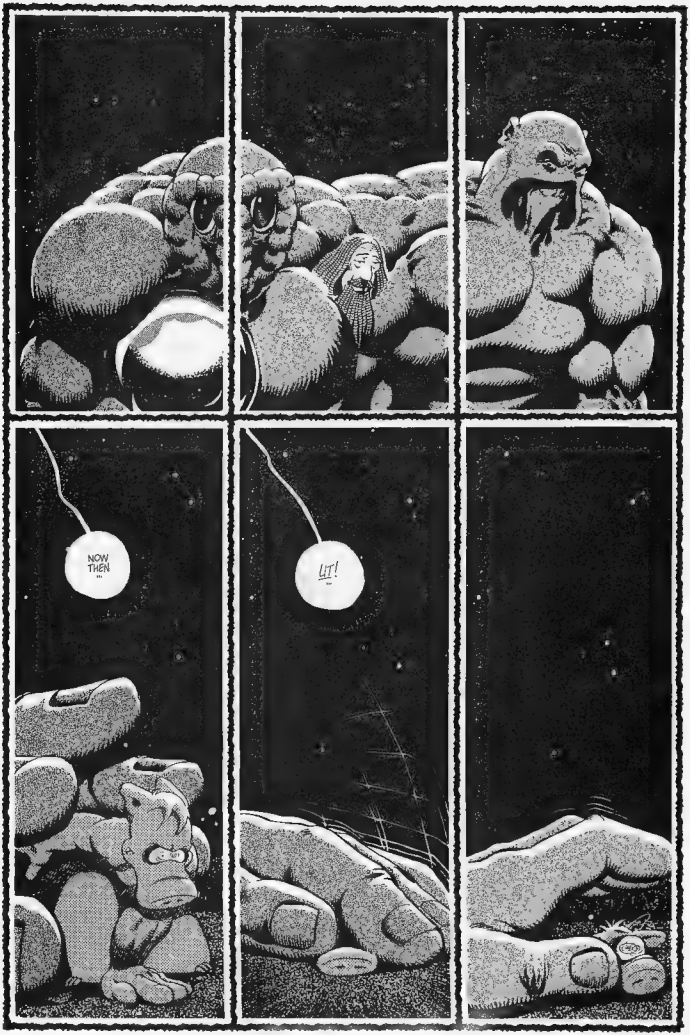

HE'S COMING ALONG NICELY ...
SO YOU SEE, I'VE GOT A FRED! I'VE GOT AN ETHEL.
I'VE GOT A SPHERE OF PUREST GOLD...
AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT..
MM?
YOUR ONLY REAL HOPE IS THAT THE DEITY TURNS OUT TO BE A SHORT, GRIM, MEAN-SPIRITED MISSHAPEN MISANTHROPE WITH POINTED EARS, A SNOUT AND A TAIL...
LET'S FACE IT.
THE ODDS ARE NOT GOOD.

NOT GOOD

AT ALL


"INEVITABLE"
"THAT WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED OR PREVENTED FROM HAPPENING"
"UNAVOIDABLE"


"CERTAIN"


NOW THEN ...
UH!

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SPECIAL EDITION • CEREBUS • THE GEORGIAN ADVENTURE

a chronology by Bob (i am the blues) Burden

When Dave and Gerhard came down in the summer of 1985 for the Atlanta Fantasy Fair they stayed at my place. We have a spare bedroom on the estate and a spare apartment in the basement and everyone has their own bathroom and such, so having house guests is no inconvenience. As anyone who has seen that episode of Robin Leech's LIFESTYLES OF THE ODD AND AIMLESS spotlighting this spacious domain will know, we have come to call it Infinity House and I act as a sort of Major Domo and groundskeeper for the owner, Robin Masters, as it is just one of his many estates worldwide. On their return to Atlanta, the two madcap Canadians enjoyed some of the most splendid weather in years and the ritual turning of the leaves. In the idyllic surroundings we forged this story of Cerebus and the Carrot in record time and this is how it happened:

CHAPTER 1

Ten days that could well have been the lost sequel to PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE. An invisible rodeo with polka music and funny hats. Grocery bags full of empty beer cans while children are starving in India. A glorious celebration of comic book art wandering like a blindfolded gunman on a collision course with his own shadow image. Numerous William Bendix sightings prompting enthusiastic dismay from the bewildered news media. Godot screams in the woods, his neck-tie caught in a beatrap as Gerhard kicks the door closed without skipping a brush stroke.

All this and wiseguys too

We are wise in our ways, to push destiny's doorbell and say "Hi, we're working our way through college by selling Grit and doing yard work, the gutters look like they need cleaning . . ."

"You guys know anything about drawing comic books?"

"Hey, do ducks play cards?"

Alright let's get to work. Art supplies. Story conference. Get some glue over here. I left my xerox machine in Hawaii so we'll just have to draw it all by hand. Torpedoes off the port bow. Turn the TV down till Divorce Court comes on. Hard right rudder. Look smart now. Heads up. Zipatone is getting low. Wait. Where'd Cerebus go? He's in the backyard raking leaves.

Ha, ha, look it's Cerebus the Yardvark.

CHAPTER 2

We had to get it done in ten days. The clock was ticking. Dave and Ger arrived like a flashy scene from an early Errol Flynn movie. Now get right to work! Could we do it? Well, it just never occurred to us we couldn't.

Analysis breeds contrition. Actually we spent about five or six working days all tolled – Dave plotting and drawing Cerebus, me drawing the Carrot and pitching in some dialogue, Ger drawing stone heads, laying tone and mopping in black and Roxanne bringing it all together by lettering the Carrot dialogue. As the finished pages racked up it was like a fighter pilot painting kills on the side of his plane. Working furiously day and night, like a well-oiled machine, we flew through it in record time.

Perhaps acting on an instinctive awareness that history is made on the spur of the moment, appearing spontaneously without trumpets or forethought we agreed to just do it; "Just fly down there and do it, man." Like a dive bomb run; like a bank job; like a road trip. Bang. It was a surprise attack on the order of our everyday lives.

"Hey, this is the way they did the first Human Torch/Submariner battle. They did that over a weekend. The whole book."

Yeah. I remember reading in Steranko's History of Comics, Bill Everett and Carl Burgos and the whole gang of them holed up in an apartment all weekend. They ate from tiles peeled off the bathroom walls and made a little furnace to cook eggs on with sterno. Just kept drawing and inking and writing.

The set-up was good for me because the Carrot would not be coming out for a while. Throwing in with Dark Horse as my distributor, I decided to have three issues in the can before the first release. This meant I would not be shipping books till the end of winter or the spring of '88. The appearance of the Carrot in Cerebus would give me some much-needed newsstand presence in the next months. But would it work? I remember reading how Mark Twain and Bret Harte once tried to collaborate on a play, renting a house in Atlantic City and they sat there for two weeks and nothing happened. They just leveled each other out or something.

Now we had two of the most iconoclastic and cantankerous **artistes** in the comic book business with very diverse and disparate characters. Would we fight and bicker like a couple of street urchin newsboys over a good corner? Would the characters work together? Would we get it done?

Sometimes it can take **weeks** just to get the **script** together.

Our collaborative effort was successful because Dave took command rather than going about things in a committee fashion. It was his book; his ballgame and his ass in the fire if it became a fiasco. By not having to worry about "the whole pizza" I was able to concentrate on my own character and never envied Dave when he counted up the pages and saw we were behind. Doing a comic yourself is a lot like being a father of a large family after a nuclear holocaust and trying to hold it all together. You worry and are constantly aware of every loose end. When you sleep at night you feel these things; like the story about the princess who could feel a pea that was placed under ten mattresses. Committees and democracy are ok for classrooms and when the ladies club decides what kind of flowers should be planted in front of the public library. But when you're under the gun there is no substitute for dictatorship and the good, old enlightened despot. And Dave has had a lot of practise at the subtle game of despotism.

CHAPTER 3

Ger: "Hey, Bob – keep an eye on Dave. I'm going to pick up the pizza. When he's been working and puttin' the brews away, sometimes he starts drinking ink."

CHAPTER 4

Dave: "It's really coming along. We did it. I can see it all coming together now."

Bob. "Whatta team. Like David Bowie and Mick Jagger. Or is it Superman and Muhammed Ali . . . Maybe Heckle and Jeckle meet Woody Woodpecker."

Dave: "I'll be Mick Jagger."

Bob: "Ok. I'll be David Bowie . . . and Ger can be Tina Turner."

Ger: "Oh, gee, thanks."

CHAPTER 5

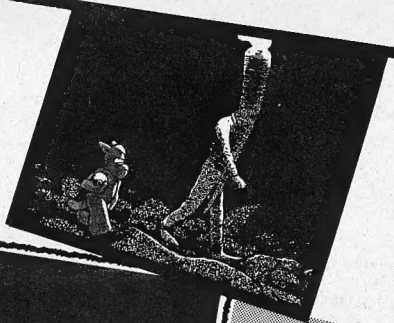
Dave : "We are finished folks. It's all over but the weeping. ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING. Dom Perignon time."

Bob: "Man, we went through this thing like the Russians were in Jersey. Let's kill that champagne and all go into the front yard and toast rush hour. In memory of this titanic hour we shall get down on our hands and knees and skurry about like dogs chasing our tails and barking like seals. The rush hour people will be confounded. That's what the Marx Brothers would have done."

Later that night in a deranged stupor Dave wanders into the Burdenian Library and goes through my collection of Ms. Tree comics, taking white-out to her bangs and redrawing her hair into a beehive. Next morning he called Gerhard in to do backgrounds; drawing little bumble bees around poor Ms. Tree's head.

It's all gone now, the moments forever dispersed in the echoes of time and my two good comrades back off to the wilds of Canada where they belong. No more "beer hunter" during the World Series, no more carloads of Mardi Gras-ing, rhumba-lining, inebriated, happy hour business women; no more cue balls exploding in the microwave oven at the 7-11. My life has settled down to a dull hum of solitary madness in my craft and my sullen art. As the silence settles in, it is a sunny day of clear blue skies and there is the sound of a distant aircraft . . .

flyer used to promote the first showing of "The Making of 104" at Mid-Ohio Con. Saturday, November 7, 1987



TV! TODAY 11 a.m.

The Making of CEREBUS 104

with - Dave SIM Bob BURDEN GERHARD

and introducing ROXANNE Starr as the other letterer

featuring "The Cerebus Theme" by Passion Exchange

as well as various tracks ripped off of Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan and others;

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The heartwarming TALE of "The Final Ascension," the little aardvark who could and The Flaming Carrot Who leads him to the Tower's Top

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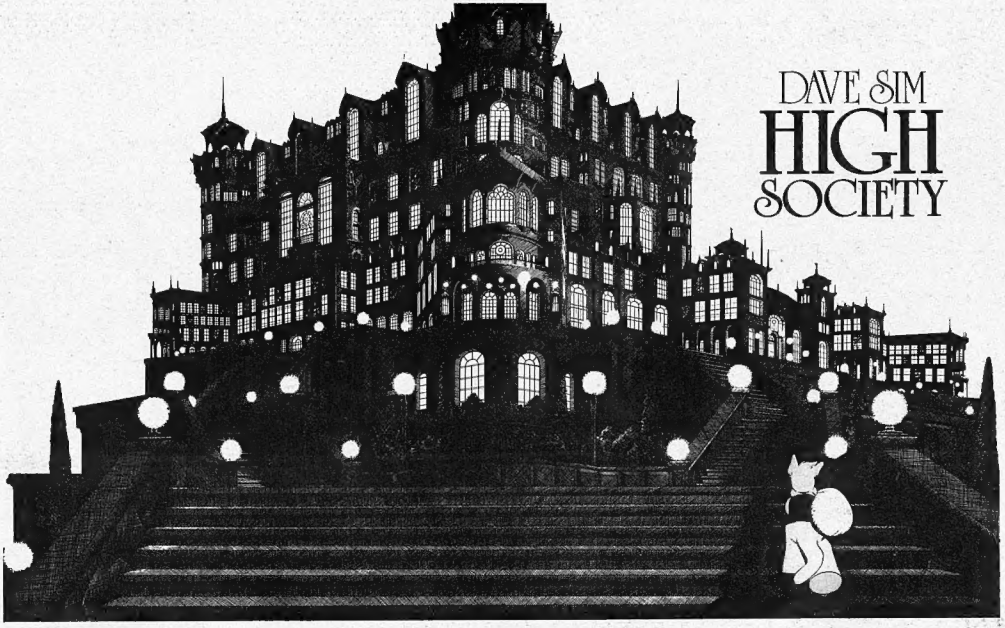

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